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THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

He struck it rich

Port Colborne man has millions of reasons to celebrate following \$7-million lottery win.

Page 5

Arresting images

Welland museum finds a new way to look back at old crime records.

Page 11

IMPORT NEWS

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Feral cats could use some help



MARYANNIE FIRTH /

IMPORT NEWS FILE PHOTO
Kristi Madison Vega, founder of Port Colborne Feline Initiative, holds a cat at Welland and District Humane Society's cat adoption centre at Seaway Mall. Learn how to help feral cats during cold winter days. See story on Page 18.

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EDUCATION

Immunization suspensions last resort: Public health

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Students have been suspended over immunizations, but those cases are generally few and short, says Niagara's public health department.

That follows a report that thousands of Ontario students are reportedly facing suspensions from school because parents haven't provided updated immunization records.

The Canadian Press reported health officials can't say exactly how many young people across the province are affected.

Carrie Beattie, Niagara public health department's spokeswoman, said it's too early in the process to say how many suspensions might be pending in the region.

The public health department reviews its records from September to December to see which students might be missing required vaccinations.

From late December to early January, it is issuing letters to parents at elementary and secondary school students.

This year, a March 18 deadline will be provided to parents to complete their child's immunization record with the public health.

"The letter goes just to let them know their child's vaccination records aren't up to date," Beattie said.

That could be because they've missed a required vaccination or they "don't realize they haven't reported it to public health, which is usually the issue," Beattie said. Public health has a secure online reporting tool for parents: www.niagaragov.ca/vaccination/vaccination.aspx.

Some parents may choose



LUCIE HENDRY/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Emily Wilson, 5, of Belleville grimaces as nurse Patti Swoffer injects her with vaccine as her mother, Nicole Wilson, tries to comfort her. Ontario law requires children to be vaccinated for certain diseases or obtain a legal exemption in order to avoid suspension from school.

not to vaccinate their children and there might not be an exemption on file with public health. In other cases, the child may be overdue for one or more vaccinations.

Suspension notifications go out in mid-April to parents indicating if records are not complete; their child will be suspended for up to 20 days effective May 24 this year.

Beattie said Niagara public health offers in-school clinics to help get those vaccinations up to date.

"So from the initial letters

actually sent out, we see a huge decline in kids that are actually eligible for health coverage by the time May comes around," she said.

Public health units typically work on differing schedules depending on how they allocate resources for vaccination reviews.

Niagara's public health department says for the 2014/15 school year it mailed a total of 13,736 first notices and 6,593 suspension notices.

On Day 1 of suspension in May 2015, 1,675 students were still overdue. Those

numbers are not segregated by school board.

"This number actually gets reduced by almost half each day as students quickly come off the overdue list," said Angela Aliferi-Maiolo, the manager of the vaccine-preventable disease program at the public health department.

She said the last year was a "very atypical year" with high numbers, and she points to two primary reasons for this. Suspension notices were not sent out the previous year, as all health units moved to a new

provincial immunization database program Panorama. "We had to do a lot of work cleaning data before issuing notices of suspension," she said.

Provincial legislation also changed adding more vaccination requirements for school attendance.

A total of 8,046 first notices have been mailed out for this school year.

District School Board of Niagara spokesman Brett Sweeney said the board works very closely with Niagara Region's public health department to "protect and

promote the health and safety of all students and staff."

"We believe this is the best place for students to be during the school day is in class and learning," Sweeney said. "The process of suspending students is proactive communication with parents to support them in updating their children's records with public health."

School boards in Toronto, Ottawa, North Bay, Hamilton, Brampton and other communities have either sent warnings to parents about possible suspensions if updated immunization records were not provided, or moved with the local health unit to suspend students.

The Canadian Press reported that Public Health said Toronto District School Board suspended 3,947 high school students in 2012-13 and 6,626 elementary students in 2013-14 for not having updated immunization records.

About 1,800 students at schools in Ottawa have been suspended since mid-December for the same reason.

Public Health Ontario, which among other things, monitors the percentage of Ontarians who receive vaccines, said it does not collect the student immunization records from local public health units.

"There is no one central place where all that information is available," said agency spokeswoman Janet Wong.

The Ministry of Health said a five-year renewal plan for its immunization program released last month will look at ways to improve public reporting of student immunization rates.

With files from The Canadian Press

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Alan Doyle
& The Beautiful Gypsies



JAN 27

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St. Catharines



■ ABROAD: St. Catharines woman spends two months volunteering in Madagascar

Living aboard a hospital ship

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

As a recent marine engineering graduate, Sara Wegener has already given herself life on the water.

The 27-year-old St. Catharines woman thought it likely she would eventually call one of the Great Lakes home.

But when opportunity arose to volunteer aboard a hospital ship docked in Madagascar, it was a life-changing chance she couldn't let sail by.

Wegener recently returned to Niagara after a six-month stint working on the Africa Mercy, the world's largest charity hospital ship. The 16,500-ton vessel is one of several operated by global charity Mercy Ships, a faith-based organization that delivers free health-care services to people with out access in the developing world.

Wegener acted as the ship's fourth engineer, overseeing its air compressors, lifesaving equipment, sewage units and on-deck mechanics.

She lived and worked among more than 400 international volunteers, including crew members, surgeons, cooks and teachers, who donated their time and skills to the cause.

"Every person on that ship was an inspiration," Wegener said, explaining that each volunteer played a role to help affect change in the lives of those brought on board for medical care.

A variety of medical issues are addressed on the hospital ship, including tumours, cleft lips and palates, cataracts and bowed legs.

Africa Mercy will remain in Tamatave, Madagascar, into 2016.

During the vessel's 10-month stay, volunteers will provide more than 2,200 surgeries, treat more than 10,000 people at a land-based dental clinic and provide education to health-care professionals in the country.

When she wasn't busy working away in the engine room, Wegener had the chance to visit with patients both before and after their



St. Catharines resident Sara Wegener recently spent two months working in Madagascar aboard Africa Mercy, the world's largest hospital ship. A highlight of her trip was spending time with local children.

procedures.

have."

While the trip as a whole was a learning experience, it was the local children Wegener encountered who taught her the most.

She spent time visiting with youngsters at area

orphanages, as well as those undergoing treatment in the ship's hospital wing, and came to admire their appreciation for the little things in life.

"You see these kids with tumours running around

with big smiles on their faces playing with balloons," she said. "They're just happy to be there."

Regardless of the situation, it's possible to push that negativity aside and focus on the positive, she said.

"I've learned how to work with a very Christian attitude. I know that we're always working for a purpose."

While she is currently applying for full-time positions aboard other vessels, Wegener plans to return to work with Mercy Ships in the future, possibly as soon as May.

Hoping to encourage others to volunteer in some capacity, Wegener emphasized that donating time to a cause can be just as valuable as contributing money.

"And you don't have to go halfway across the world to volunteer," she said.

"It's important to give back to the community, no matter where you are. Do what you can to make a difference, to make the world a better place."



St. Catharines resident Sara Wegener recently spent two months working in Madagascar aboard Africa Mercy, the world's largest hospital ship.

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Will for a living wage exists, but resources may not

We have just entered 2016, and the No. 1 topic of conversation that I've had thus far has been poverty in Niagara.

While we hear about poverty year round, it is always a much more prevalent topic around the holidays. This is when many of us step up to the plate and financially support some good organizations for people less fortunate.

We all think we understand poverty in our community. However, the truth is that most of us do not. I think that many of us would be surprised to learn that some of our neighbours, colleagues, friends and even family are living in poverty. Just because a household has both parents working full-time jobs doesn't mean that they are able to afford living or quality of life that allows for good health, education, entertainment opportunities and full participation in modern life.

When most of us think



DOLORES FABIANO

about what makes our lives good, it's our health and being able to proactively work at it. It's educating ourselves with special interest courses, books and experiences. It's the fun times that we share with friends, getting together for dinner or going to a concert. It's the memories of a family trip when no one thinks of the regular stresses of life. It's the joy of Christmas shopping and buying the perfect gift for your spouse or children. It's the enjoyment of watching your child play on a sports team and making new friends. These are not overly ambitious desires, yet for many hard working people in our community, these simple pleasures are just not

within their reach.

We typically view poverty as someone living on the streets or in their car. We assume it affects those with no education, no job and no skills. This is not true. Here in Niagara, there are thousands and thousands of people who have education, jobs and skills, yet they live in poverty. Folks who understand poverty better than I, attribute it largely to the cost of living in Niagara and to the wages that are paid.

This issue is not unique to Niagara. Communities across North America are trying to come up with solutions. Many have introduced a "living wage." A living wage is based on a formula that determines the wage level required for a family with two children and two adults to earn full time year round to meet a standard of living within the community. Here in Niagara, a group has been working on this and it is my under-

standing that the living wage for Niagara will be presented early this year.

When this is released, I anticipate many conversations to be generated, likely centralized on how the living wage compares to our actual wage. As a representative of the business sector and on behalf of thousands of employers, I am reminding people to keep an open mind about this topic. I expect that when people realize that the new living wage and their current wages do not match, the burden will fall on the employers. I'm sure that a common comment will be that greedy business owners just need to step up and pay all of their employees at minimum the living wage, whatever it may be. That if employers just paid good wages and paid them better, then problem would go away.

Serving more than 1,500 businesses, I can honestly say that I have not met one single employer who does not want to provide their

employees with a positive work experience. They certainly want to pay fair wages and provide all of the things they can so that the employees are satisfied and stay with them.

The will to provide a living wage is there. The reality is that the resources may not be. And there they sit.

When a figure like this is released, it is often seen as the new ideal and, for many, the expectation. Is it fair to look to our business owners, the majority of which are working endless hours running their small business to keep it afloat, and demand that they jack up their wages in order to meet this new standard? And let me ask this: what will happen when the company's revenue does not cover the expense of paying its employees? Hours are cut. And businesses are let go. And businesses fall without them.

The fact is that the gap between living wage — whatever it may be — and

actual wages needs to be filled. The reality is that it is unreasonable to expect employers to assume this responsibility entirely. This is where I ask people to have an open mind. How else can we bridge the gap? Can government step up and be part of the solution. How about other groups and agencies? Does our economic development team have all the answers? What do businesses need to achieve in order to be in a position to afford a living wage? What about the good old taxpayer?

We all agree that people should have an income to afford not only the basics but the ability to not live in poverty. Why then is the burden always firmly put to the business owners? If we all agree to implement a living wage to help combat poverty, then shouldn't we all shoulder the burden?

Dolores Fabiano is executive director of Niagara Falls, Port Colborne-Wainfleet and Welland-Pelham chambers of commerce.

And now for some very good news

GORD ABRAHAM
Port Colborne Baptist Church

Every day, we read, hear and see bad news. If it is not the warming and subsequent effects on the climate and creation, it's violence, war, economic recession, joblessness and on and on! These are fear, uncertainty and growing hopelessness among young persons.

My wife and I have come to the place where we try to regulate how much we expose ourselves to because of the negative effects it can have on our daily thinking. Can we find "good news?"

Can we find a road map to show us where we need

to be going, or a person who can definitively give us answers to our questions and solve our deepest problems?

Let me bring you some good news, and the first step to approaching this.

God is for us and has laid out where we are. What he has planned, where we are going and how we can work in co-operation with him.

As negative as things can be, God is for us and He promises hope — if we trust him, and not ourselves!

God has created us and set into motion, as Creator, a plan to redeem us and restore the creation into His loving and gracious rule. This plan is not a smear campaign against his alien-

ated creatures but rather, a cleanup campaign through the death of His Son, the King Jesus Christ.

It stated in the Gospel of John:3:16, "God loved the world so much that he gave his only and beloved Son, so that everyone who believes in (trusts) him will not perish but have eternal life."

His big plan includes the final restoration of both heaven and earth. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10).

The images of all God has in store for us are given in the last book of the Bible,

Revelation 21:1-2, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, come down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

These images of the old being gone with new heavens and a new earth being reconstituted from the old is presented as a city coming down to the new earth. God's dimension (heaven) will again be reunited with the material world He created minus all the affects of the sin of the past (death, pain, suffering, alienation etc.).

God will make all things right and make all things new.

God will be reunited with His people on this newly created earth, in Christ Jesus, just as He originally planned and began creating of the Creation (Gen 1:2).

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them." (Rev 21:3).

As part of this big plan, God the Father put the sins of all people on His Son, Jesus, and raised Jesus out of death. This was the start of all things becoming new.

Ben Witherington said, "In

dealt its death blow!" Those who ask Jesus Christ to be their sin bearer and forgiver are brought back into God's family and become part of his gracious loving rule that this new Creation — this is how God is now.

What are we to do? We are told very clearly, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. 11 As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." (Romans 10:9-10). God is for us!

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■ LOTTERY

Port Colborne couple wins more than \$7 million

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

A Port Colborne man took one last chance at playing Lotto 6/49 on Jan. 2, and won more than \$7 million richer for it.

"This was going to be the last lottery I played," William 'Alex' Gray said in a news release issued by Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

"Money was just too tight. In fact, we came very close to selling our house — and now look at us."

Alex and his wife Diane travelled to the OLG Prize Centre in Toronto on Monday via limo to

pick up their prize.

The total payout was \$7,034,292.

Alex said he had heard on TV the winning ticket was sold in the Welland area. He checked his numbers online and told his wife he knew exactly where the winning ticket was purchased.

Alex took the ticket to his favourite grocery store to have it validated. If there's that he began celebrating.

"I've told lots of people my news. This win has turned everything around for us," he said in the

release.

The couple has big plans for their winnings. They are animal lovers and will be donating money to a local charity in their two dogs' names.

The couple also plans to replace their car, and said they are thinking of getting an SUV so there will be more room for their "pups."

Despite repeated attempts for comment, the lucky couple could not be reached.

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SUPPLIED

Lucky William 'Alex' Gray of Port Colborne holds a cheque for \$7,034,292 after winning the LOTTO 6/49 on Jan. 9.



■ TELEVISION

Dragons' Den auditions coming to Niagara Falls

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Niagara, get your inventions ready: Dragons' Den is on the way.

The CBC show will hear pitches from aspiring entrepreneurs March 12 in Niagara Falls. As they have in the past three years, auditions will be held at the Scotiabank Convention Centre from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Producers will undertake a 33-city tour of Canada, starting Feb. 6 at the Barbara Frum Atrium in CBC's Toronto headquarters.

Previous auditions in Niagara have seen local residents pitch everything from hemp snack food to

glow-in-the-dark toilet seats.

In 2012, Southburn Vineyards co-owner Bill Redemeyer got a \$160,000 investment from 'Dragon' Arlene Dickinson for his antioxidant powder Bioflavia.

If auditions pass muster with producers, they'll be invited to appear on the show's upcoming 11th season and face the stars, a group of Canadian business moguls looking to invest in worthy ideas.

This season's Dragons are sports/real estate investor Jim Trebiloch, tech guru Michael Wekerle, Buityopia.co co-founder Michele Romanow, fashion pioneer Joe

Minman and Minhas Breweries and Distillery co-owner Manjot Minhas.

Auditions are open to all ages and businesses at any stage of devel-

opment. Prospective pitchers are encouraged to apply online and bring a completed application form to the audition.

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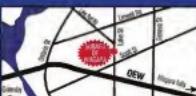
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YEAR AHEAD

Niagara Catholic watching the numbers

WAYNE CAMPBELL
Special to Postmedia Network

In 2016 a new Catholic school will go up, the first in a few years.

A larger St. Martin, with 454 students, will replace a current school 351-student school in Smithville. The \$10-million elementary school is expected to open in 2017.

Rev. Paul MacNeil, chairman of Niagara Catholic District School Board, called it a big project for the new year.

Of course, he said, there are always upgrades to buildings in a system of 57 schools which includes eight high schools and more than 21,700 students.

The board is not considering any closings, MacNeil said.

The board's eight trustees and staff, however, do watch Niagara's demographic trends. They see areas of population growth in Niagara Falls, Beamsville, Pelham and Grimsby, as well as shrinkage in rural communities.

The heart of a school board's finances relies on the number students in a system. The province provides funds based on daily enrolment.

"It's a matter of burns in the seats," MacNeil said with a laugh during an interview at his new day job, pastor of Our Lady of Scapular in Niagara Falls.

"I hope and pray our region would take off," he said about growth in the local economy. It would bring families to Niagara.

"We have so much going for us," close to Toronto, on the border with the United States and good place to live, he said.

The province, meanwhile, wants to ensure school buildings are used to capacity and open to the community.

"I'm really on our schools being collaborative," MacNeil said. "We want to be leaders in how we line up shared usage."

In its strategic plan, Vision 2020, the board stresses the use of schools as community hubs. Schools could be centres for a parish, a village, a neighbourhood, whatever the need.

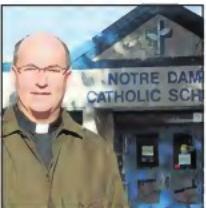
Or shared usage, the one caution always must be the safety of students, MacNeil said.

"You wouldn't want anything to happen to one of those precious kids."

In 2016 the school board will review Vision 2020 to see if it needs any adjustment.

MacNeil calls the strategic plan, which began in 2008, a living document capable of change.

As a school board trustee, MacNeil represents Pelham, West Lincoln, Lin-



REV. PAUL MACNEIL/FOR POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Rev. Paul MacNeil, chair of Niagara Catholic District School Board, wants students to develop a love of learning and the ability to think for themselves.

coin and Grimsby. He was elected to a second term in 2014 while pastor of St. Ann Catholic Church in Fenwick.

MacNeil was just re-elected to the one-year position as chairman by the other trustees.

He said he let his name stand because one year just was not quite enough to have an effect.

He has a particular interest in governance.

"I want to ensure the eight of us work well together and are engaged in good discussion," he said. "That includes expression of the dissenting voices."

MacNeil strives to set their dedication to Catholic education.

"Our main purpose is to set the direction for the school board and make sure we have the money to do it."

The day-to-day operations are in the hands of the school board's staff.

The trustees, MacNeil said, have two key priorities: ensuring a good Catholic education and putting students first.

The money for the board's budget is based on estimates of the number of students throughout the year. It must ensure funding is balanced across schools.

This is always a challenge, the board chairman said.

MacNeil became a trustee partly because he loves learning. The parish priest has lectured at Niagara University and Canisius College, and is working on a PhD at McMaster University in Hamilton.

"I love science and mathematics and don't find it inconsistent with my faith," he said.

He wants to see students use their faith to think things through for themselves.

COURT: \$11-million grow-op case returns to court March 14

Pot case adjourned over immigration concerns

TONY RICCIUTO

Postmedia Network

Three men who tended to more than 11,000 marijuana plants at a large grow-op at a greenhouse in Wainfleet claim they were just gardeners and not the masterminds behind the multi-million operation.

The three accused, who were expected to be convicted before Superior Court Justice in Welland, will return to court March 14, because the judge wanted some clarification regarding an immigration issue that could affect one of the accused.

During an earlier court appearance, the three men, Neng Jia Lin, 61, of Scarborough, Xian Zhi Wang, 51, of Toronto, and Rui Han Lin, 33, of Markham, all pleaded guilty to production of a controlled substance.

Originally, the three men had also been charged with possession for the purpose of trafficking, but that charge was later withdrawn by the defence.

Court heard that Lin, who has never been in trouble before with the law, is a landed immigrant, and that if he received a sentence longer than six months he could have an issue with immigration.

Defence lawyer Darren Sederoff, who represents all three accused, said his clients spent six days in custody following their arrest in July 2012. While on bail for nearly four years, they have co-operated with police, have been employed while awaiting trial, and there have been no breaches of any terms of their release.

"There is no need to send them into custody," said Sederoff, who has suggested a conditional sentence of the six-to-12-month range, followed by a year of probation.

For Lin, he suggested six months less a day so that it would not trigger an immigration hearing.

Sederoff said the men earned \$120 per day, they were just gardeners, and had no connection to the property.

He noted there was no theft of hydro, so that eliminated any safety concerns that are often raised when a bypass is used to avoid the hydro meter.

Federal prosecutor Darren Anger said he accepted that the three accused were the gardeners, but without them the masterminds of the operation would have had to tend to the plants themselves or not be able



POSTMEDIA FILE PHOTO

Niagara Regional Police seized more than \$11 million in marijuana in July 2012 from greenhouses at a property on Highway 3 in Wainfleet, just west of Smith Road.

to conduct their business.

"The three accused were actively involved in the operation of the greenhouse," said Anger. "There were 11,323 plants here."

This was a highly commercial enterprise," Court heard when police entered the greenhouse the three men fled and ran into a nearby cornfield. Lin suffered numerous bites to his leg by a dog from the canine unit.

Anger said a six-month sentence is not sufficient in this case because other people have received longer sentences with fewer plants involved.

The Crown said there is no evidence immigration is tracking this case, or that they plan to do anything.

Judge Harrison Arrell said he needs to "straighten out" the immigration issue before passing sentence. The case will return to Welland court in the afternoon on March 14.

The greenhouse is located on Highway 3, just west of Smith Road, in Wainfleet.

The property was once used to grow cucumbers.

In 2005, the same property was the site of another multi-million-dollar pot bust.

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The incredible Jim and Pam Yorlido will electrify audiences in "Country Love Songs"



Described as "The Ultimate Valentine's Date", a special theatrical show called "Country Love Songs" comes to the intimate Roselawn Theatre in Port Colborne on Sunday February 14th at 3pm. Celebrating the greatest love songs from all your favourite country artists, this heartwarming and fun-filled event features world-class live musical performances starring the amazing Memphis Cats band.

You'll hear classic love songs from legendary country artists including Tammy Wynette, Kenny Rogers, Randy Travis, Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline and more. As a special date night bonus, the incredible Jim Yorlido, best known as "the voice of Johnny Cash", will make a guest appearance to perform some sizzling country duets with his lovely wife Pam.

"Country Love Songs" also includes the fabulous Bruce Tournay as "The Piano Man" and the stunning LoraLee McGuirl on lead vocals.

Stroll down memory lane with your sweetheart as you sing along to timeless hits including "Stand By Your Man", "Islands In The Stream", "Forever and Ever Amen", "I Will Always Love You", "Ring of Fire" and "Crazy".

Tickets to see this special Valentine's Show at the Roselawn Theatre in Port Colborne on Sunday February 14th at 3pm are on sale now, value priced at only \$30 all inclusive, available at the theatre box office located at 296 Friesen Avenue in Port Colborne or by calling 905-834-7572. Get your tickets early to ensure the best Valentine's date ever!

SPECIAL MATINEE SHOW!

COUNTRY Love Songs



BRUCE TOURNAY



LORALEE MCGUIRL

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 14
3:00 P.M.

ROSELAWN THEATRE
905-834-7572

**TICKETS
\$30
all inclusive**

■ COMIC CON: Filmmaker, actor will make appearance

Kevin Smith brings live show to Niagara Falls

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Silent Bob is headed to Niagara Falls.

Kevin Smith, the indie filmmaker behind cult hits like Clerks and Chasing Amy, will join longtime co-star Jay Mewes for a night at the Scoti-

bank Convention Centre June 4 as part of the fifth annual Niagara Falls Comic Con.

Smith and Mewes are best known as the local slackers Jay and Silent Bob, frequenting Clerks (1994) are returning in several of Smith's films. The characters are back in

the upcoming Mallrats 2 and Clerks III.

The show is a separate event from the Comic Con, which takes place June 3 to 7 at the Scotiabank Convention Centre. Tickets are \$35, or \$125 for VIP which guarantees a seat in the first four rows and an autographed

photo. While Smith will not appear at Comic Con, Mewes will take part June 3 and 4.

Comic Con co-owner Chris Dabrowski said nabbing Smith's show was especially satisfying.

"Smith's name is synonymous with comic cons and

pop culture, and the live show is a rare treat for fans. Especially in Canada."

Smith's live show is usually a marathon gabfest known to last up to 12 hours, as seen on his Eventing series. The show will be part of his 'smödcast' at www.smödcast.com.

Since the surprise success of Clerks, Smith has built a huge following as director, author and even comic store owner. He owns the Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash comic book store in Red Bank, New Jersey.

But many of his greatest moments have occurred on

stage, sharing stories. Smith's epic Q&A sessions have spawned stories like his on-set feed with Willis during filming of Cop Out, and his awkwardness after getting a Southwest Airlines flight in 2010 because of his weight.

"He's definitely been on our radar for a few years," said Dabrowski. Confirmed celebrities include wrestler Shawn Michaels, Cheers star George Wendt, Star Trek's Walter Koenig, Austin Powers star Verne Troyer, Hellraiser's Doug Bradley and E!s De Wallace. Tickets on sale now at [niagarafallscomiccon.com](http://www.niagarafallscomiccon.com).

UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION LINE – NOTICE OF ROAD CLOSURE For the Niagara Region Wind Project, FWRN

Project Name Niagara Region Wind Project (the "Project")

Project Location Within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario

Notice Dated At Haldimand County and Niagara Region, the 17th of January 2016.

Niagara Region Wind Corporation, now FWRN LP (the "Proponent"), are engaging in a renewable energy project for which a Renewable Energy Approval ("REA") was issued by the Ministry of the Environment (now the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change) on November 21, 2014.

Project Description

The Project is located within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario. The Project will consist of 77 wind turbine generators, step-up transformer, electrical collector lines, a transmission line, two transformer substations, turbine access roads and construction staging areas. The Project will have a total maximum nameplate capacity of up to 230 MW.

Underground Transmission Line – Road Closure CANBOROUGH ROAD:

Vault and duct bank installations, along with underground trenching will begin on Canborough Road, between Colver Road to Regional Road 45.

The road closure would be from: Jan. 25 to Feb. 2, 2016.

Detours for this road closure are: Wellandport Road to Regional Road 45 (see diagram).



Please note that public services (i.e. mail delivery, garbage pick-up, school buses, etc.) may be disrupted during this time.

If you have any obstructions in the right-of-way near your property (e.g. fences, private gas lines, gardens, tiles, electrical lines), please contact Shiloh Berriman (contact information below).

Project Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the Project's construction phase, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

NIAGARA REGION WIND PROJECT CONTACT	GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION
Shiloh Berriman Email: shiloh.berriman@enercon.de Cell: 289-683-2563	General Number: 819-363-6491 Toll Free: 1-844-363-6491 Project email: info@nrrw.ca Project website: www.nrrw.ca

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BAY BEACH

Fort Erie mayor: Crystal Beach revitalization on course

SARAH FERGUSON
Postmedia Network

Mayor Wayne Redekop predicts the Bay Beach Master Plan would become "the catalyst for the revitalization of Crystal Beach."

The Town is taking on a \$2.05-million enhancement project, which will be completed by the course of the next five years, to improve the beach.

"I'd like to commend Ms. (Donna) Hinde, staff and all of the groups that have been involved," Redekop said Monday night after receiving a copy of the completed Bay Beach Master plan during a council-in-committee meeting.

Redekop said all of the "hard work" of everyone involved in the development of the plan has "paid off."

In April 2014, the previous term's council supported the development of a master plan to enhance Fort Erie's shoreline. The plans looks at use of the public space, public access, environmental features, site parking, land use, buildings and public amenities.

The Town hired the Planning Partnership, a consultant, to develop the master plan for Bay Beach.

On Monday, councillors unanimously supported the completed document.

The improvements include a new washroom facility with showers and accessible change rooms, improved parking, a festival square, admission gates and kiosk, pedestrian walkways, a children's play area, volleyball nets, improved landscaping and views of the beach from Erie Road as well as opportunity for residential and commercial development.

The master plan also calls for the re-purposing of the Lobster House to function as an event space, a shelter for picnic tables, a market hall, or gallery.

According to the report, a number of residents expressed an interest in

"preserving the building to show the history of Bay Beach."

The Town also consulted with ecology expert Professor Lisa Kehl and Mark Kolberg, a renowned coastal engineer to develop an environmental strategy to protect the Fowler's Tote habitat that exists at Bay Beach. The master plan calls for the removal of the dance hall foundation to "provide for expansion of the sand dune, tote habitat and beach areas."

The document stated there is currently 1,610 square feet of tote habitat identified on the site" and an "additional 10,000 square-feet of protected area will be made available for the tote habitat."

While the work is underway, the beach will still be accessible to the public.

An in-depth public consultation process was undertaken to ensure the community supported the project.

"We dealt with hundreds of e-mails, phone calls and in-person conversations," Hinde said. "We've had tremendous input from all three work-shops," she added.

The funds to pay for the project will be generated from the Town's parkland reserve, development charges reserve and the sale of the northeast lot at 4152 Erie Rd.

Although no commitments have been made by a number of service clubs and associations have expressed an interest in donating funds and participating in fundraising initiatives.

The Town will also apply for \$450,000 from the Niagara Region's Lakefront enhancement Strategy.

According to the master plan, the improvements are expected to generate revenue through event fees and permits, locker rentals, food truck permits, vendor permits, parking fines and fees, and charging non-residents an admission fee

of \$5 per person for adults 16 and over beginning in 2017.

It currently operates, the beach property costs \$70,000 annually. The master plan document states the proposed improvements have the "poten-

tial to generate \$348,000 in gross revenue annually."

After the improvements are made, the operation will cost an estimated \$260,000 annually but the site is estimated to generate a "potential annual net revenue of \$88,000" a year.

The master plan will be ratified during the next council meeting. The Town will need to hire a consultant team to design a site plan before the project can move forward. A report will be completed and presented to councillors at a

council meeting in February.

A copy of the master plan is available on the Town's web site at www.town.forterie.ca.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

Change Notice: Overhead Transmission Line - Periodic Day-time Road Closure

Sideroad 42

For the Niagara Region Wind Project, FWRN

Project Name
Project Location

Niagara Region Wind Project (the "Project")
Within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario.

Notice Dated at

Haldimand County and Niagara Region, the 16th of January 2016.

Niagara Region Wind Corporation, now FWRN LP (the "Proponent"), are engaging in a renewable energy project for which a Renewable Energy Approval ("REA") was issued by the Ministry of the Environment (now the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change) on November 21, 2014.

Project Description

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Hydro Pole Installation and Tree Clearing for Overhead Transmission Line - Road Closure

Hydro pole installation and tree clearing operations are ongoing on Sideroad 42, and requires periodic day-time full road closure for the safety of vehicular traffic and workers site. The road closure would be from: Jan. 14th to 29th. Detours for this road closure are: Regional Road 45 to Wellandport Road to Concession 6. Please note that public services (i.e. mail delivery, garbage pick-up, school buses, etc.) may be disrupted during this time.

If you have any obstructions in the right-of-way near your property (e.g. fences, private gas lines, gardens, tiles, electrical lines), please contact Shiloh Berriman (contact information below).

Project Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the Project's construction phase, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

NIAGARA REGION WIND PROJECT CONTACT

Shiloh Berriman
Email: shiloh.berriman@enercon.de
Cell: 289-683-2563

GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

General Number: 819-363-6491
Toll Free: 1-844-363-6491
Project email: info@nrwc.ca
Project website: www.nrwc.ca



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FORT ERIE**
905 371-1564

**WEST SIDE DR.
PORT COLBORNE**
905-835-1156

■ ARRESTING IMAGES: OPP Museum's travelling exhibition arrives in Welland

Mug shots offer glimpse into past

FRANKIE IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

They look like classic portraits from the late 1800s and early 1900s — well-dressed and formally looking men and women posing in their attire.

They are some of the earliest mug shots, and they're currently on display at Welland Museum.

"We're very fortunate, it's an award winning exhibit from the OPP Museum. It's been travelling extensively throughout Ontario for quite a long time and the timing for us was perfect," said museum curator Penny Morningstar.

"Arresting Images: Mug shots from The OPP Museum" features 100 historic mug shots taken between 1886 and 1908.

According to a press release, the collection was assembled by the Niagara Falls "Ontario Police," the precursor to the OPP.

Morningstar said the exhibit provides the public the opportunity to see into the

past and into some of the earliest examples of documentation within the justice system. All of the examples of documentation, Morningstar said, go into what's known to be the normal procedure today.

She said she thinks visitors to the museum will enjoy looking at the mug shots and the information and educational packages that go along with them.

"Every photograph tells a story," she said. "It's always you get past the initial wow-factor of the image and then you start immediately thinking 'what led up to this photograph?' or 'why is that person?' or 'what happened in their life?' or 'how did it lead up to this particular moment?' and it's the same principle with mug shots."

The exhibit is now open and will run until May 21. The museum is open Tuesdays - Saturdays from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

frankie.ikeman@postmedia.ca
Twitter: @frankiekeman



Welland Museum curator Penny Morningstar is pictured among the Arresting Images exhibition on Friday, Jan. 15. The exhibit will run in Welland from Jan. 13-May 21.



One of the mugshots from Arresting Images. Mugshots from The OPP Museum.

FRANKIE IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Proposals are invited from the community for projects that will provide an effective service to address poverty at a neighbourhood level for residents of the Niagara region.

The Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) uses a neighbourhood-based approach to addressing poverty with the understanding that the nature and degree of poverty varies from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

NPI seeks to build strong communities to ease the enduring impacts of poverty and the stigma and stress associated with living in poverty. Stronger and healthier communities will provide individuals with social supports and access to the broader factors that affect health.

Applications will be available at
www.unitedwayniagara.org from
February 1, 2016 – February 26, 2016

An information session will be held

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Niagara Region Headquarters,
Council Chambers
2201 St. David's Road, Thorold

For more information, please visit www.unitedwayniagara.org
or email Natalie.Chaumont@unitedwayniagara.org



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LOCAL NEWS

■ CHARITY

Girl Guides will host book drive

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

A community book drive will provide an opportunity for young people to learn about Women's Place of South Niagara and the importance of literacy.

The book drive on Saturday, Jan. 30 will be held from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Port Colborne Baptist Church on Ridgewood Avenue.

Jane Taft, a Girl Guide leader, organized the book drive as part of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goal, which is aimed at achieving universal primary education by 2015.

Melody McFetridge and Taft are literacy agents who have been working together to make the book drive a possibility.

The Girl Guides of Canada's National Service Project is an opportunity for members to provide services to their community. The Girl Guide program Words in Action is designed to be part of the UN's goal. Words in Action encourages Girl Guides to run book drives, do book exchanges, create literacy backpacks, volunteers to read among other initiatives.

Throughout the day people can drop off books which will be donated to Women's Place for the agency's book sale. Funds raised will support Women's Place frontline operations, include purchasing groceries and providing elec-



JANE TAFT, Girl Guide leader, prepares for the Girl Guide book drive in Port Colborne on Saturday, Jan. 30, by creating literacy backpacks.

tricity for the Niagara Falls and Welland locations.

Taft said the Girl Guides will have the chance to learn about literacy through activities that engage reading and math skills, as well as other forms.

Taft chose to support Women's Place because she has worked with the agency. She said when she was younger, she stayed in a women's shelter, "so I know the importance of those services."

Jennifer McQuestion, community engagement manager for Women's Place, will speak to the Girl Guides about abuse. Various activities will be used to show the girls what abuse is and the difference between abuse and an unhealthy relationship.

"I'm always really grateful when people invite us to come in to talk to young people. It's important to have people understand what abuse is early on. The younger you get them, the better," McQuestion said.

The talk is open to anyone who wants to bring their son or daughter. Taft said as long as there is space for the Girl Guides, everyone can participate.

The book drive will also be an opportunity for the Girl Guides to put together backpacks with school supplies, books, and other goods. Donations are needed from the public to fill the bags. They will be donated to Port Cares for the organization's Back-to-School Program.



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Treschak Enterprises moves to Hwy. 20

It's been a whirlwind start to 2016 for Treschak Enterprises.

The Welland-based auto body supply specialists of 35 years have grown so much in the past few years, they've had to move to a new location.

"We grew exponentially in the last couple of years. We needed to move before we grew but we recently busted into the Toronto market," said Jamie Treschak.

Jamie, along with his father who started the business, Don Treschak, run the business together and are in the middle of moving from Niagara Street next to M.T. Bellies to the new location on Highway 20. Don't ask the family what municipality they're in, but they like to consider it Midland.

"It's really funny because our address says Welland according to Canada Post, according to Bell Canada we're Pelham, according to Thorold they get our taxes, and our phone number is Fonthill," the younger Treschak said.

Despite the confusion, Treschak said the new location — just west of Highway 406 — was the right fit.

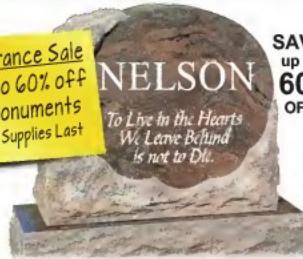
"We looked for about a year and a half before we found this place and once we found this place it was the right fit. We were about 3,500 square feet where we were, we're 9,500 square feet here and it's going to be clean, neat, everything's going to be in one place, I can fit all my trucks inside here so the trucks can be loaded the night before and away we go," he said.

The company restructured in 2011 eliminating the retail side of the business, to sell exclusively to auto body repair shops.

"It was hard to make that transition because Dad started the business

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Jamie Treschak is pictured in Treschak Enterprises' new warehouse on Highway 20.

FRANZ KLEINER/WILHELM TRIENKE

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Pictured L to R: Bill Johnston (Sales & Leasing), Beverly B. (Winner)
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Is the LightSheer Diode FDA approved?

The laser was developed in 1984 and the first hair removal study began in July 1986. The FDA cleared the device for treatments in December 1997. The FDA then granted it's clearance for permanent hair reduction in April 1999 after it demonstrated in a 3000 person study a better than 95% permanent hair loss after only 3 treatments.

Is hair reduction permanent?

Yes, in 95% of individuals. Treatments work the most successfully on hair that is light brown to black. Blond, grey and some reds do not have enough melanin for the light to absorb. Most clients will loose 20-30% of their毛发 with each treatment. The FDA defines permanence as a hair that does not regrow after 2 cycles of growth. Hair regrows in cycles between 4-12 weeks depending on the body area.

Is there an age limit for treatments?

It is suggested that girls have gone through puberty. All ages can benefit as long as they understand the process and potential side effects.

Who is a candidate for laser hair treatments?

Anyone who has hair that is light brown to black. The LightSheer with its patented chiller tip to 10 degrees Celsius allows clients with any skin colour to be treated safely and effectively.

How many treatments will I need?

Hair grows in continuous cycles. The anagen or growth phase of hair contains the largest amounts of melanin and this is where the hair is thickest. From scientific studies we know that it takes approximately 3 to 4 years for hair to grow from one toe to 5 toes. These anagen hairs are affected each treatment. Most clients require a minimum of three treatments up to six sessions. Repeated sessions are necessary. Finer hair and darker skin clients may require 6-8 treatments. If you suffer from a limbature your treatments may be longer. To have the best results you will need to be consistent with your treatments. Your technician's expertise and your technician's philosophy of care will determine how many treatments you will apply. You will be happy with 50-95% less hair and may want to discontinue and others will want to continue until they reach their maximum loss of 70-95%. No one will ever be 100% hair free.

What areas can be treated?

All areas of the body except for the

area around the eye



What can I expect during the treatment?

The laser targets the melanin, the pigment located in the hair bulb and shaft. The laser energy causes thermal damage to the毛发. The damage causes delayed regrowth and permanent destruction of the hair in anagen or growth phase.

Will the laser pain?

A laser is similar to the sun in that it delivers concentrated "heat" or energy. This is "melanin" deposited in the hair. The laser is attracted to melanin. The technology in the LightSheer allows the skin to be cooled effectively to not transmiser the "heat" but the energy of the laser must be reduced accommodate a tan. Therefore the client may require more treatments than someone without a tan. To be more effective and aggressive treatment will be better to not have a tan.

How long do I wait between treatments?

Waiting time may vary with individuals. The general guideline is 4-6 weeks for neck and above areas and 8-12 weeks for areas below the neck.

What can I do with the hair in between treatments?

You should not have much hair to manage. If you need to, shaving or trimming is the most effective way to maintain in between treatments.

Is it safe?

Yes. A laser is an intense source of light that produces

heat to target a melanin in the hair shaft. The wavelength of the LightSheer is attracted mostly to the melanin. The light is pulsed for a fraction of a second and the heat is then pulled into the hair's毛发. The patented chiller tip runs at four degrees Celsius and protects the epidermis (the outer portion of the skin).

How long will the treatment take?

This will depend on the size of the area being treated. Can take as short as 3 minutes to 2 hours. Your technician will inform you of the time required.

What about ingrown hairs?

The laser will not create ingrown. If you suffer from them the laser will produce an effective treatment to clear the ingrown.

Can I wear makeup?

Yes, as long as the skin is intact. If the skin is open anywhere you must use polysporin ointment on the open spots.

When laser cannot be done:

- if you are pregnant
 - if you are on medication called Accutane
 - if you make ketosis
 - if you have had a recent tattoo, manicure or had electrolysis within the last 4 weeks
- Laser hair removal must be used with caution if you suffer from cold sores or genital herpes.

How much will the treatments cost?

Over three laser treatments have proven to be less costly than other ongoing methods such as waxing, shaving or electrolysis. A price list will be provided by the clinic.

Is this covered by my insurance?

Most insurance companies do not offer reimbursement for cosmetic procedures. However, consult your insurance company for more information.

Is there a guarantee that this will work?

Laser reduction works 80% of the time in most individuals. Unfortunately, 10% of people may not respond at all. This cannot be determined until after 2 treatments. If you attend all sessions as suggested you should attain 70-95% permanent hair reduction.



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Feral felines in need of warm shelters

FRANK INGRAM
Postmedia Network

Winter's colder weather is begin-

ning to grip Niagara — and that means stray cats can use some help.

Port Colborne Feline Initiative president and founder Kristi Mallinson Vogel says providing shelter,

food and water are simple ways people can try to smother community (feral) cats.

The best way to deal with these cats is to supply shelter, she says.

The organization suggests making a shelter with a plastic (like Rubbermaid) lined tote, one-inch rigid Styrofoam insulation and straw. To make the shelter, cut the insulation to size to line all sides of the tote, including the top and the bottom. Cut a six-by-six-inch entranceway through both the tote and the insulation, fill with straw, top with a lid and add a door.

The straw, Mallinson Vogel says, is the key. "I do want to point out that straw is critical. People tend to think that blankets and pillows and bedding would be so much nicer, but in fact they have the opposite effect."

Mallinson Vogel says those materials absorb moisture and draw the body heat away from the cat, whereas straw will reflect heat back to the cat.

Once the shelter is made, the feline initiative suggests placing it in an inconspicuous and sheltered spot.

The next step is to set up a feeding station.

Using another tote, cut out one side

and place food and water inside. Mallinson Vogel suggests, if possible, a mixture of dry cat kibble and canned wet food, but if canned food is not a possibility, dry food

will do.

She said it's important to put out only enough for the cat's being fed, so that

other creatures aren't attracted to the food,

and so that people can track the cat's eating schedule and try to feed accordingly.

Food, water and shelter will help com-

munity cats get through the winter, Mal-

linson Vogel says, but there are other things to help get them spayed or neutered.

Several organizations in Niagara run

spay/neuter programs for feral cats, includ-

ing PCFL. Some humane society agencies

run spay/neuter clinics at low cost.

Mallinson Vogel says it's not recom-

mended that people attempt to catch stray

cats and place them in a cat carrier, but

rather borrow a safe, humane trap to catch

the cat.

For more information and to contact

Port Colborne Feline Initiative, visit www.

pcflicats.org.

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■ HABITAT FOR HUMANITY NIAGARA

Family awaits keys to new life

FRANKI ICKEMAN
Postmedia Network

It's a home being built at Niagara College, one seen by its future residents as "a new beginning in everything."

People are building half houses at the college's Welland campus to write good wishes in the woodwork to the family that will eventually occupy that Habitat for Humanity home.

Habitat Niagara last week held a wood-signing ceremony at the college's Rankin Technology Centre where a team of more than 70 students from the construction techniques and renovation technician programs have been busy building a modular house since October.

The home is set to move to its permanent location on Martin Street in Welland in the spring.

A family of six who came to Canada as refugees from El Salvador in 2011 will call the house home.

"For us it means everything right now

because we had a very hard time coming to Canada," said Claudia Palma. "We had a very hard time in El Salvador and we had to leave everything — we left our lives, our house, our friends, and this is our new beginning in everything. "Especially, this house is like when a boat finally arrives to the port."

"To the final port," husband Jose Palma chimed in.

Claudia and Jose, their three children and Claudia's mother, Antonia, are looking forward to the fresh start their Habitat home will provide.

The family currently resides in Fort Erie. Claudia is working through requirements that will allow her to practise dentistry in Canada and Jose is in an apprenticeship program at Niagara College.

In her free time, Claudia volunteers with the Diocese of St. Catharines helping with the sponsorship process to bring Syrian refugees to the region.

See HOME Page 21

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■ NEW HOUSE

Modular home being built on college campus

FROM PAGE 19

She said she feels it's important for her and her family to help people fleeing their homes for Canada, as they once did.

"I think this is why exactly the point that you can understand how difficult it is to move from your home country to a new country — the cultural shock is very huge," Claudia said. "(But) for the hope for a brighter future, the hope for safety is priceless."

Monday's event was a way for Habitat for Human-

ity Niagara to celebrate the work that's been done and to offer best wishes to the Palma family, said CEO Alasdair Davis.

"We are here to celebrate the stage of construction that we're at with this modular home at Niagara College, to celebrate it by being here and cheering on and celebrating with the students," he said.

During opening speeches, Anthony Elford, one of the students involved in the construction of the home, spoke of the significance of being

involved in a Habitat build.

"Doing the house for Habitat for Humanity, it's been an amazing experience to get in and learn a completely different field of the same trade. It's also an amazing feeling to build a house for a family that's in great need for it," Elford said.

Palma left messages con-

gratulating the family, offer-

ing them hope for the future,

health and happiness.

"Everyone was handed a



FRANKI HESMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Claudia Palma, back left, with her mother Antonia, Jose Palma and children Sammuel, Jose Jr. and Isabella pose for photographs in what will soon be their new Habitat for Humanity Niagara home. A wood-signing ceremony was held last week at Niagara College's Welland campus, where the house is being built.

celebration, expression of excitement, prayers, etc., onto the wood that's here," he said.

that will eventually be cov-

sages will be there forever and the family knows it," Davis said.

SPOTLIGHT on service

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New coffee roaster on the block

TIFFANY MAYER
Special to Postmedia Network

Carm and Emily Block get a lot of invitations to come to coffee.

They also get a lot of requests to bring the java with them. Such is life when you're Niagara's newest craft coffee master, and you're turning out beans that make you coffee katcha-listers.

The husband and wife are the proprietors of Black Coffee Roasters, a micro-roaster making green coffee beans into something brew-worthy from a workshop in their St. Catharines home.

They officially launched last month, but Black Coffee Roasters has been more than a year of some incredibly good — and equally bad — cups in the making.

"We drank a lot of terrible coffee, and we had lots of it," Cam recalled about those early experimental roasts.

It was a good cuppa brewed by someone else, however, that woke them up to the possibility of a caffeinated business venture.

Before slinging coffee beans, the couple could occasionally be found serving fish tacos on the El Gastroonomo Vagabundo food truck at the Niagara-on-the-Lake SuperMarket. Roving baristas Manual Labour Coffee often doled out demitasses alongside them.

"They'd bring over amazing drinks," Cam said. "I never had coffee that good before. I said 'Hey guys, now that you've ruined me, you have to teach

me how to do this.'"

Trade secrets were shared over flat whites. No longer would the blocks, who'd previously treated coffee as a mere vessel of caffeine, down chain store cappuccinos. They started driving beyond Niagara's borders to get their joe from small roasters in Hamilton and Toronto.

"That got kind of expensive," Cam said. "A lot of friends were doing the same thing."

And that inspired the idea for DIY coffee roasting.

The newlywed Blocks also saw turning raw coffee beans into business-launching brew as a good way to spend time together as a couple. So they nervously hit send on a wifey transfer to Taiwan and waited weeks for the shiny contraption of flanges and pipes known as Huky 500 coffee roaster.

Then they started ordering beans. The first roast they brewed tasted like battery acid.

"It was horrible. I bought all whole bunch of beans from all over to try. I had no idea how to source coffee. I just read the description alone and thought it sounded nice," Cam said.

Eventually, they found a direct trade supplier, which is a distribution method they say puts fewer limits on coffee growers than a fair trade system.

Farmers are given incentives to grow better beans, which paid a higher premium. The couple's eyes were opened to the difference upon sampling their first direct trade roast.

If it sounds like hepped up

marketing, they're certain one sip of their sweet Ethiopian, earthy Panamanian or floral Congolese brews will prove they aren't full of beans.

"Try it. Taste the difference," Cam said. "We source the best coffee, first of all."

Then they roast it, 500 grams at a time for 12 minutes to bring out chocolate, apricot, even nerostine flavour notes, much like in wine. And as with a good glass of tipple, they've decided coffee is meant to be savoured, not to simply give a person a job.

"Making coffee kind of forces you to slow down for a bit," Emily said. "As much as it hypes you up, making coffee is the ritual bit to be enjoyed."

The real rush, however, comes from seeing more than friends and family scooping up their 350-gram bags, for sale at Craft Arts Market in St. Catharines or online at blackcoffee.ca.

"It's kind of surreal, and it's fun," Cam said. "We get to have people over, and when we offer coffee it's the conversation piece. When you come out with something good, you enjoy it. But at the end of the day, it is just coffee, too."

"We don't take ourselves too seriously. It's a privilege to just to drink coffee in Canada."

Coffee gets crafty

Perhaps you'd like a coffee to go with your up-cycled dress or handmade note card. Craft Arts Market on James Street in St. Catharines can hook you up.

The store, which provides an outlet for local artisans making



PHOTOS BY TIFFANY MAYER / SPECIAL TO THE INQUIRER

Nancy Kapodistrias serves up a hot chocolate at Craft Arts Market in St. Catharines, which is garnering a reputation for serving great coffee.

clothing, paper products, housewares and small-batch preserves, has garnered a reputation for brewing some of the best cappuccinos and flat whites in the region.

It's a not-so-well-kept secret my coffee-drinking friends have shared with me. But this bit of knowledge is wasted on this card-carrying member of Team Tea. (Word has it, Craft Arts Market also makes tea, though that's something to behold.)

Turns out, being the best baristas was the goal of store co-owners Sarah Jarvis and Nancy Kapodistrias. They started making coffee at their shop last summer to satisfy Jarvis's own need for a good cup while expanding their

revenue sources.

"We wanted good coffee in St. Catharines, so we found a way to incorporate it into the store," said Kapodistrias, who has my back on Team Tea.

"Do we have a lot of coffee

shops here, but we wanted to raise the standards. People have noticed. We have people coming in here saying, 'Hey you have the best coffee.'

The duo serve Pilot Coffee, a Toronto roaster, which trained Jarvis and Kapodistrias to serve their perfect trade java "just right."

The beans are roasted the day before they're sent to Craft Arts Market. They're ground per order, brewed on a Pilot-issue machine and served with organic milk.

"They seem more like scientists," Kapodistrias said. "They're very professional and take it very seriously."

While others vouch for the coffee, I stand by Craft Arts Market's hot chocolate. It's made with Toronto's Soul Chocolate, which uses single origin cacao, and comes topped with whip cream or coconut whip for those avoiding dairy.

It definitely raises the (chocolate) bar.

Tiff Mayer is the author of Niagara Food: A Culinary History of the Peninsula's Bounty (The History Press). She also blogs about food and farming at eatingniagara.com. You can reach her at eatingniagara@gmail.com or Twitter @eatingniagara.

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